



## EARLY HEARING DETECTION AND INTERVENTION (EHDI)

### WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

Hearing loss occurs in approximately 12,000 babies each year (three of every 1,000) and, when undetected, can result in developmental delays. Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) is a national initiative that supports the early identification of infants with hearing loss through hearing screening, audiologic and medical evaluation, and enrollment in early intervention services when needed. Without EHDI programs the average age of identification of children with hearing loss is 1.5-3 years of age, which research suggests is already past the start of the critical period for optimal speech and language acquisition. When a child's hearing loss is identified soon after birth, families and professionals can make sure the child receives intervention services at an early age. The services help the child to develop communication and language skills that will last a lifetime.

### WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

- Funded 30 states to track infants who screen positive for hearing loss to determine whether they receive appropriate diagnostic and intervention services.
- Began a multi-state study on the causes of hearing loss in newborns and young children.
- Funded a study in Hawaii to evaluate the effectiveness of early identification and intervention for children with hearing loss.
- Began a study on the accuracy of the two-stage method of screening infants for hearing loss to determine if some infants with mild loss are missed.
- Funded a study in Utah to determine the economic costs of screening, follow-up, and diagnosis associated with EHDI programs.
- Partnered with HRSA to fund a multi-state investigation to determine the reasons children do not complete the EHDI process and to develop strategies to reduce this "loss to follow-up."
- Created a prototype of a database that will provide state profiles, making all EHDI information available to state health departments, other government agencies, parents, and other interested parties.

### WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

- Continue to work with states to develop a more comprehensive database for monitoring progress on the following national Healthy People 2010 goals: a) all infants are to be screened for hearing loss by 1 month of age, preferably before they are discharged from the hospital; b) infants who screen positive for hearing loss will be referred for an audiological evaluation by 3 months of age; and c) infants with confirmed hearing loss will be referred for comprehensive medical and intervention services by age 6 months.
- Move from a prototype to actual usable database for state profiles.
- Continue to conduct and disseminate results from studies into causes of hearing loss and the effectiveness of screening and early intervention programs.

*For further information about this or other CDC programs, visit [www.cdc.gov/programs](http://www.cdc.gov/programs)*

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